

## **Proposed Traditional Neighborhood Districts and Zoning Code Reformatting**

### **Executive Summary**

Draft proposed urban village zoning districts allow a broader range of land uses than existing zoning districts, and provide opportunities for higher-density pedestrian-oriented mixed housing and commercial development on major transit streets, along with design standards to help ensure that such development is of high quality and protects the character of existing neighborhoods.

Development of these new zoning districts has been pushed by housing advocates for many years, and it is a key recommendation in the Saint Paul Housing Action Plan as well as the Land Use and Housing chapters of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan. The design standards are a tool for supporting quality redevelopment that a number of our district councils have called for in recent years, without the proliferation of individual overlay districts, each with their own unique set of design standards, that can result in administrative inefficiency and enforcement difficulty. The proposed TN Traditional Neighborhood Districts are a key to achieving a high number of housing units and quality urban village redevelopment for most of the major development sites within the city.

The draft urban village districts were developed with the following functional objectives and constraints:

- Provide for a greater mix of uses and more urban design guidance and without creating new administrative and plan review burdens for staff already stretched too thin.
- Function simply, clearly and efficiently, in a way that is easy for the public as well as zoning staff to use and understand.
- Fit seamlessly into the existing zoning code, not make zoning regulations more complex.

### **Traditional Neighborhood Districts**

The Planning Commission recommends the creation of three new TN Traditional Neighborhood zoning districts that would cover all types of mixed-use urban village sites, from small commercial nodes in existing neighborhoods to the largest redevelopment sites. In tandem with the new TN districts, a set of design standards is included to provide the type of design direction for new development the City and district councils have long been advocating. The design standards are intended to foster new development that sustains its quality and increases its value over the long term. The features of each proposed TN Traditional Neighborhood District would be as follows:

- **TN1:** This district is based on the OS-1 Local Office-Service District and provides for a variety of residential, office and service uses to serve neighborhood needs. It would function mainly as a transitional zone between higher-intensity commercial districts such as University Avenue and adjacent residential neighborhoods. It would also likely be used on the “edges” of large urban village sites where a transition to a lower-density neighborhood or other district is needed.
- **TN2:** This district would allow a mix of residential uses along with the types of commercial uses allowed in the existing B-2 Community Business District, with additional standards for building and parking placement and design. It could be used at pedestrian- and transit-oriented nodes such as Phalen Village where a diversity of land uses and some intensification of use would be appropriate. The district might also be useful along pedestrian-oriented shopping streets, and is currently recommended by the Arcade Street Task Force for most of Arcade.
- **TN3:** The most intense district, it is designed for development of large sites such as Koch-Mobil and the West Side Flats, where a site-specific master plan, minimum densities and diversity in land use and housing types, common open space and an interconnected street pattern are required. It is also designed as a tool for achieving high-quality, higher-density mixed-use development on smaller sites such as at University-Emerald and the University-Raymond area, where there is already a mix of uses or the comprehensive plan has identified potential for urban village development.

The TN3 district will replace the OS-2 district since that district was intended as an interim mixed-use district for the larger urban village sites. Affected OS-2 sites are the Upper Landing and West Side Flats. The Planning Commission has recommended the changes from OS-2 to TN3 occur when the TN ordinance text is adopted. No rezoning of other sites is recommended as part of TN text adoption. Any future rezoning to TN would follow normal rezoning processes.

### **Additional Code Amendments**

In addition to the new TN districts, the Planning Commission recommends some new general standards for site plan review citywide, similar to standards recently adopted as part of special overlay zones for White Bear Avenue and the Shepard-Davern area. They are the kind of standards that have been called for by district councils through small area plans such as the Phalen Village Plan, the Concord-Robert Plan and others, but have not yet been implemented. The Commission also recommends amendments to provide for a broader range of housing options as called for in the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, and remove barriers to traditional neighborhood development.

- *Site Plan Review.* Additional basic standards for building entries, contextual design, screening of mechanical equipment and garage location.
- *Parking Facilities.* Additional basic standards for screening, design and lighting.
- *Sign Regulations.* Additional guidelines for multi-tenant buildings and signs within TN districts.
- *Secondary and Live-work Dwellings.* Permit secondary dwellings, such as “carriage house dwellings” and “mother-in-law apartments,” and live-work dwellings in certain circumstances.
- *Subdivision Ordinance.* Additional language that encourages interconnected street patterns, traditional block sizes, and alleys.

### **Code Reformatting and Streamlining**

Finally, the Planning Commission recommends basic reformatting of the whole zoning code in order to streamline, simplify, and generally make it more user friendly. A major proposed reformatting feature is to replace dozens of fairly random lists of land uses and conditions for uses, redundant and inconsistent language, and a confusing web of references to other zoning districts with a simple, logically organized table of permitted and conditional uses for each general zoning category, and land use standards and conditions logically organized by land use category. The advantage of this approach, found in the new Minneapolis ordinance and other recent zoning codes, is that it avoids either listing all uses within each district or cross referencing previous districts. It also allows the reader to easily compare uses across all districts within a given category. Specific recommendations for streamlining the code include:

- Zoning permits valid for two years instead of one.
- Planning Commission may grant variances related to rezoning, avoiding redundant public hearings.
- Residential garages can be rebuilt on existing garage pad even if nonconforming.
- Open, covered porches may project six feet into a required front yard.
- Signs permitted to project four feet over sidewalk in downtown, avoiding numerous variances.
- Cluster housing may be detached as well as attached, allowing single-family houses on small lots with townhouse-style maintenance agreements.
- Incorporate all permitted industrial uses into main part of code, eliminating appendices.
- Replace complex room count formula for determining residential density with simple, clear minimum lot area per unit figures in a table.
- Increase maximum height allowance for one-family structures from 30 to 35 feet to avoid need for variances that are almost always granted.
- Increase maximum lot coverage for principal structures in residential districts from 30% to 35% to reduce need for numerous variances always granted.